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May 25, 2010

Hon. Ken Salazar  
Secretary of the Interior  
1849 C Street Northwest  
Washington, DC 20240

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515

COMMITTEE ON  
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AND THE INTERNET  
  
HOUSE PERMANENT SELECT  
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Dear Secretary Salazar:

I share the views you expressed this week regarding the "anger and frustration" you feel toward those responsible, particularly BP, for their ongoing failure to stop the oil leak in the Gulf. Americans should expect better planning and response on the part of the private companies to which we entrust great responsibility for our environment and our energy production.

However, the American people also expect better from the federal government. Reports from the Gulf coast indicate that supplies of oil-absorbing boom, skimmers, vacuums, and barges are short and that federal agencies have dragged their feet on approvals for other solutions proposed by Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal, such as the construction of new barrier islands to prevent leaked oil from damaging that state's existing coast and marshlands.

The disaster has also drawn attention to the near-complete dependence the federal government has on leaseholders like BP and its partner companies to prevent and respond to emergencies when technical problems arise. It's critically important that the government work with private industry to efficiently explore for and produce American energy, but the government's lack of contingency planning for this kind of catastrophe should be a wake up call that better preparations are needed.

I recently introduced legislation, H.R. 5356, which will place new requirements on the Department to ensure that resources are in place to quickly cap a similar future leak and to respond more effectively to protect our coastlines should any future leaks occur. I look forward to the opportunity to work with you and with others in the Administration to pass this bill. I am hopeful that you and your staff will review the legislation in short order and join me in promoting it among my colleagues in the House and Senate.

This is an important moment for our government to demonstrate to the American people and, most importantly, the people directly affected by this disaster – a tragedy in which 11 American workers lost their lives – that we can and will work together to stop the oil leak and limit its damage to the environment and nearby communities. It's also important that we send a message that those responsible for this problem – both inside and outside the government – will be held accountable and that we take steps to ensure it never happens again.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely regards,



Roy Blunt

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